



Natural Capital Initiative Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018 (Mid-term review 2016¹)

The Natural Capital Initiative in context: ‘Natural capital’² is an increasingly popular metaphor for the features of the natural environment that underpin society, the economy and wellbeing. It puts the natural environment on an equal footing to financial, manufactured, human and social capital. In doing so, it is bringing about a step change in how the environment is prioritised and valued throughout society and in the economy. The increasing interest in natural capital and the development of enabling methodologies among science, policy and business communities has advanced both the scope and potential impact of this area in recent years. An encouraging number of activities have developed aimed at advancing different aspects of the field. Having carried out a mapping analysis of these activities, we have identified that there remains a need for a respected independent forum to bring together, highlight, debate and distil messages from across these communities in order to mainstream this approach in an integrated way. The Natural Capital Initiative has an established track-record as an effective convenor, providing a platform for just such discussion based on the effective and ethical use of evidence from across the natural and social sciences.

Partners: The Natural Capital Initiative is a partnership between four leading scientific organisations in the UK: The Society of Biology, the British Ecological Society, the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and the James Hutton Institute.

NCI’s mission: The NCI’s mission is to support decision-making that results in the sustainable management of our natural capital. We aim to do this by:

- Initiating and facilitating dialogue between people from academia, policy, business and civil society who make or influence decisions to find shared solutions and approaches; and
- communicating independent, authoritative synthesis and evaluation of the scientific evidence base.

Our aim is to be the UK’s leading forum through which decision-makers from academia, business, civil society and policy can engage in meaningful cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral dialogue on how to embed natural capital thinking in policy and practice based on the best available evidence from across the natural and social sciences.

NCI’s values: The NCI champions:

- Policy- and decision- making based on scientific evidence.
- Interdisciplinary, cross-sector engagement.
- A whole-systems perspective that seeks to develop our resilience to change.
- A positive approach that aims to identify pragmatic solutions.

¹ Due to the rapidly changing and shifting landscape in the natural capital/ecosystem services space, it is necessary to put in place a mid-term review since NCI will need to ensure it remains nimble and relevant, and that any developments are reflected in its strategy.

² Reference the first State of natural capital Report 2013 for definition.

NCI's principles of success: NCI partners agree that NCI activities should demonstrate the following:

- **Promote the value** of natural and/or social science in natural capital-related decision-making;
- **Facilitate interdisciplinary working** in order to inform and influence policy and practice in the public and/or private sectors.
- **Create recognition** for NCI as an honest broker: an independent, neutral, evidence-based convener;

NCI's objectives and related activities:

1. Initiating and facilitating dialogue between people from academia, policy, business and civil society who make or influence decisions to find shared solutions and approaches:

NCI will work to achieve this strategic aim through three types of activity:

- i. A '**Natural Capital Summit**', to be held once every five years (subject to mid-term review). The aim of this event is to bring together representatives from the academic, policy, civil society and business sectors in order to increase appreciation of the natural capital concept, promote the value of integrated science in relation to planning and decision-making, engage participants in finding shared solutions and approaches, and highlight the state of progress towards effective inclusion of natural capital concepts in planning and practice. Outputs from the summit, e.g joint statement/declaration, will be actively disseminated and used to inform future activity.
 - ii. '**NCI Dialogues**' (**public**). These will be quarterly short, sharp public events. The aim will be to develop shared language and approaches, and build understanding between sectors of varying perspectives. They will be co-hosted and/or sponsored.
 - iii. '**NCI Roundtables**' (**invite-only**): In addition to NCI Dialogues, NCI will seek to engage potential corporate sponsors and/or policymakers in invited-participant roundtable discussions across the sectors, which will see small groups of key individuals meet to discuss and advance particular issues, resulting in tangible outcomes, e.g. solutions, shared messages, shared perspectives, new partnerships.
2. Communicating independent, authoritative synthesis and evaluation of the scientific evidence base:

NCI will work to achieve this strategic aim through the following activities:

- i. **Publication of an annual literature review/topic report (not in a 'summit' year)** with tailored versions for target audiences, and related events to promote this output and take into the policy and practice space. (e.g. launch, breakfast briefing, Twitter Q&A, etc.). This will be written in Plain English, with a particular emphasis on explaining terms and communicating ideas in a concise and engaging manner. The scope of the reports will include concepts/ideas, tools/methods and data syntheses/case studies with a view to making recommendations and identifying solutions.
- ii. Using the **website and social media** as a communications platform to stimulate discussion and dialogue across sectors, to present evidence on the effectiveness of natural capital stewardship and to communicate the outcomes of its other activity strands.
- iii. **Engagement and connection with existing platforms, networks and initiatives**, identifying and taking up opportunities, where possible, to make the NCI visible and audible at relevant events, and/or through relevant communications channels, where natural capital is or should be on the agenda. This will be on an on-going, opportunistic, and pragmatic basis. In so doing, NCI will place a particular emphasis on engaging professions and sectors that have not previously perceived stewardship of the natural environment to be (a major) part of their core business.

In all of its activities, NCI currently has the UK as its main geographic focus in terms of developing partnerships, networks, and contacts, but will seek to establish growing links overseas where appropriate and relevant.

This strategy will be subject to review by end 2016.

Appendix:

We will measure progress on this strategy through:

- 1) The increased persistence and regularity of key individuals and organisations contacting us as 'NCI' (or through individual partners seeking to work with NCI) to (i) request information (ii) work with them in partnership or (iii) request our presence at events;
- 2) The diversity of sectors and professional groups actively involved (participating in events). This could be measured by the standard typology of the sciences, categories in the private sector (e.g. FTSE100 companies, SMEs, food, transport etc), number of Government departments etc.
- 3) The geographical spread of people actively involved (to reflect the spread of population density throughout the UK and the international dimension to managing natural capital).
- 4) Positive feedback on NCI activities and events, both from participants and sponsors.
- 5) Growth in the number of visits to our website and twitter feed, including increased interaction from audience.
- 6) Number of articles published (in all media) with reference to NCI.